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(71) Applicant (*for all designated States except AG, AU, BB, CA, CY, GB, GD, GH, GM, IE, IL, IN, KE, LK, LS, MN, MW, NZ, SD, SG, SL, SZ, TT, TZ, UG, ZA, ZW*): **UNILEVER N.V. [NL/NL]; Weena 455, NL-3013 AL Rotterdam (NL).**

(71) Applicant (*for AG, AU, BB, CA, CY, GB, GD, GH, GM, IE, IL, KE, LK, LS, MN, MW, MZ, NZ, SD, SG, SL, SZ, TT, TZ, UG, ZA, ZW only*): **UNILEVER PLC [GB/GB]; Unilever House, Blackfriars, London, Greater London EC4P 4BQ (GB).**

(71) Applicant (*for IN only*): **HINDUSTAN LEVER LTD [IN/IN]; Hindustan Lever House, 165-166 Backbay Reclamation, Mumbai 400 020, Maharashtra (IN).**

(72) Inventor: **CALABRESE, Giuseppe; Lever Faberge, Via Lombardia, 1, I-20083 Gaggiano (IT).**

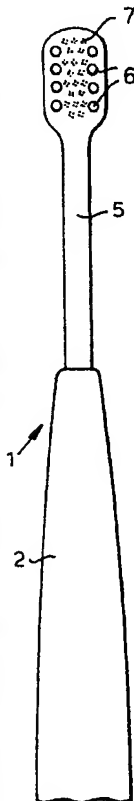
(74) Agent: **KAN, Jacob; Unilever N.V., Olivier van Noortlaan 120, NL-3133 AT Vlaarding (NL).**

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(54) Title: **ELECTRIC TOOTHBRUSH**

(57) Abstract: An electric toothbrush comprises a handle and a head, characterised in that the head has a rubbery cleaning element.



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*For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.*

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ELECTRIC TOOTHBRUSH

The present invention concerns an electric toothbrush comprising a handle and a head, characterised in that the  
5 head has a rubbery cleaning element.

Electric toothbrushes are well known in the art and typically comprise a motor element housed within the brush handle and a head, which is usually replaceable.

10 Most electric brushes effect cleaning by rapidly moving the brush head (hereinafter known as oscillating brushes) but some merely vibrate (hereinafter known as vibrating brushes).

15 There is a multitude of oscillating brushes on the market and some have particular oscillating patterns, e.g. longitudinally oscillating elements, or they may have multiple brush heads, such as the one marketed by Phillips  
20 under the tradename 'Plaque Remover ®', which comprises a rotating head and a laterally oscillating array of bristles distal to the brush handle.

An example of a vibrating brush is sold by J&J under the  
25 tradename 'Powerbrush®'.

Manual brushes with rubbery bristles are well-known in the prior art and may provide a polishing, cleaning or gum managing benefit. For example, WO 98/22000 (Asher)  
30 discloses a brush comprising at least one plaque removing member which is surrounded by a plurality of bristles.

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In our co-pending application GB 9912923.1 we describe a brush comprising a housing for a motor and a brush head which is flexible.

- 5 We have found that the benefits provided by a brush head comprising a rubbery cleaning element can be greatly enhanced if provided on an electric toothbrush.

10 An object of the present invention is to provide a cheap electric toothbrush, which provides an improved cleaning benefit.

We have found that an electric toothbrush can provide an improvement upon the prior art when the brush head comprises  
15 rubbery cleaning elements.

Accordingly, the present invention provides an electric toothbrush, characterised in that it comprises a rubbery cleaning element.  
20

By rubbery cleaning element is meant a cleaning element, e.g. a bristle, which is made of a rubbery material ie. one which exhibits flexible and resilient characteristics.

- 25 In a preferred embodiment, the rubbery cleaning element is in the form of fingers which are generally thicker than conventional nylon bristles.

In a particularly preferred embodiment, the rubbery cleaning  
30 element is in the form of a flap or lamella. Such a flap or

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lamella may be either linear or arcuate in a cross-section parallel to the brush head base.

Depending on the size of the rubbery element it is envisaged  
5 that any number of rubbery elements may be present on the brush and may be in combination with any member of bristle tufts.

A rubbery cleaning element is an enlarged bristle made of a  
10 rubbery material. By rubbery is meant that the material has some elastic nature. Given that electric toothbrushes vibrate at an extremely high frequency it is anticipated that a high elastic nature is not necessary and a material with a Shore A hardness of less than 100 is suitable for use  
15 in the present invention.

In a preferred embodiment, the rubbery material has a Shore A hardness of less than 100, more preferably less than 80, and especially less than 55. Preferably the rubbery  
20 material also has a minimum Shore A hardness of 15, more preferably 25.

Particularly suitable rubbery material include elastomeric materials such as those described in W097/20484, the  
25 contents of which are incorporated by reference.

It is also envisaged that the head of the brush according to the invention is replaceable.

30 The rubbery cleaning element may also serve to provide a polishing benefit to the teeth surfaces.

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It is also possible for the rubbery cleaning element to additionally comprise abrasive materials such as silicas to enhance the cleaning or polishing benefit.

5 In an alternative aspect the invention provides an electric toothbrush with improved sensory benefits. The brush according to the invention provides an improved feel in the oral cavity, due to the presence of the rubbery material. This is particularly so when the non-bristle bearing  
10 surfaces of the head is significantly covered by a rubbery material and contacts the buccal lining. This sensory benefit is seen as an important consumer positive.

The head of the brush according to the invention may either  
15 be a vibrating head or an oscillating head. For example, the rubbery cleaning element may merely vibrate to effect cleaning or it may be fixed on a rotating head.

The invention will not be described with reference to the  
20 non-limiting figure.

Figure 1 is an elevation of a brush according to the invention. It shows a brush (1) comprising a handle (2) and a head (3). The head (3) comprises a bristle bearing portion  
25 (4) and a neck portion (5). The bristle bearing portion (4) comprises a rubbery cleaning element (6) and conventional bristle tufts (7).

Typically, the handle (2) will comprise a motor element  
30 which vibrates or oscillates at least the brush head (3).

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Figure 2 is a plan view of the brush shown in Figure 1 showing the layout of the rubbery cleaning members and the conventional bristle tufts.

- 5 Figure 3 is a plan view of a brush head designed to rotate around a central point (9).

Shown are rubbery cleaning elements in the form of fingers (10) and lamellae (8) as well as conventional bristles (7).

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**CLAIMS**

1. An electric toothbrush comprising a handle and a head,  
characterised in that the head has a rubbery cleaning  
5 element.
2. A toothbrush according to claim 1, characterised in that  
the head comprises a rubbery lamella.
- 10 3. A toothbrush according to claim 1 or 2, characterised in  
that the head comprises a rubbery lamella and a bristle  
tuft.
4. A toothbrush according to any preceding claim,  
15 characterised in that the head is replaceable.
5. Use of a toothbrush according to any preceding claim for  
brushing the teeth.
- 20 6. Use of a toothbrush according to any of claims 1-4 for  
polishing the teeth.



Fig.1.

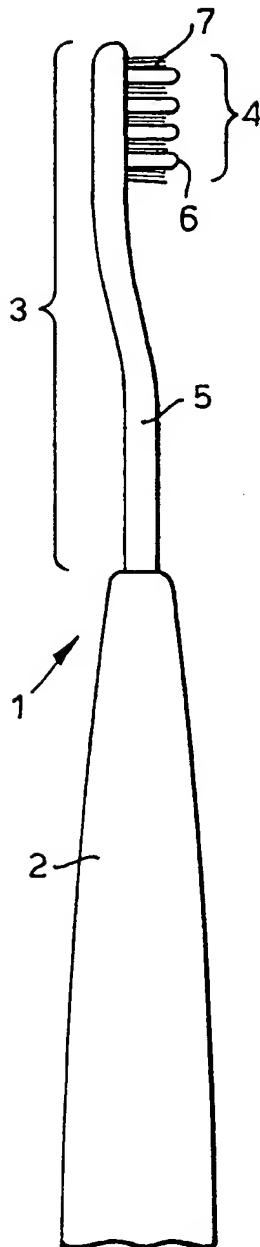


Fig.2.

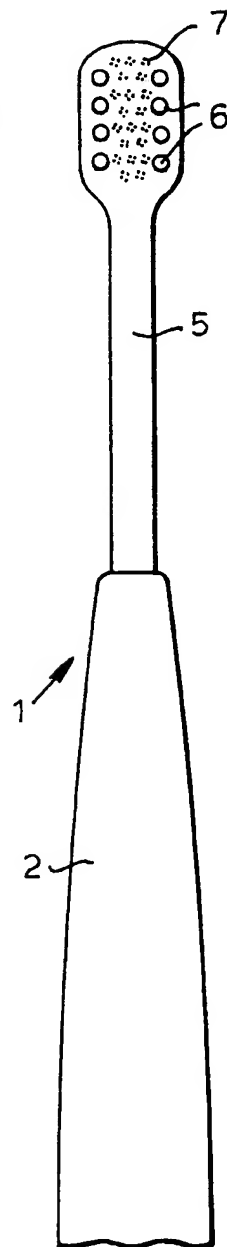
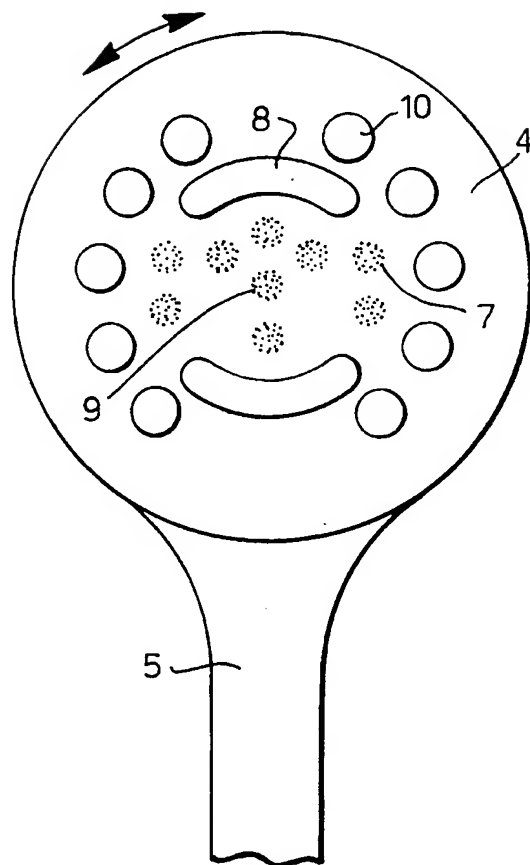


Fig.3.



# INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

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**A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER**  
IPC 7 A46B9/04 A46B9/06

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

**B. FIELDS SEARCHED**

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 7 A46B A61C

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal

**C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT**

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X	EP 0 435 329 A (STAAR DEV CO SA) 3 July 1991 (1991-07-03) abstract column 3, line 36 - line 46 figures 1,4,5	1,2,4-6
Y	---	3
Y	US 5 735 011 A (ASHER RANDALL S) 7 April 1998 (1998-04-07) abstract column 3, line 4 - line 42 figures 1,2	3
Y	US 5 689 850 A (SHEKALIM AVRAHAM) 25 November 1997 (1997-11-25) abstract figure 1	1-6
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☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

☒ Patent family members are listed in annex.

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European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentaan 2  
NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk  
Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl,  
Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016

Authorized officer

Ottesen, R

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## C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 5 604 951 A (SHIPP ANTHONY D) 25 February 1997 (1997-02-25) abstract column 3, line 48 -column 4, line 9 figures 1,4 ---	1-6
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